

Tangled Up With Miriam

BY SEWELL FORD.

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Say, if I hadn't been havin' a dopy streak I'd a known somethin' was about due. There hadn't a thing happened to me for more'n a week, when Pinckney blows into the studio, just casual like, as if he'd only come in cause he found the door open. That should have put me leery; but it didn't. I gives him the hail and tells him he's lookin' like a pink just off the ice.

"Shorty," says he, "how are you on charity?"

"I'm a cinch," says I. "Every panhandler that's north of Madison square knows he can work me for a beer check any time he can run me down."

"Then you'll be glad to excise your talents in aid of a worthy cause," says he.

"It don't follow," says I. "The de-sev'n poor I passes up. There's too much done for 'em as it is. It's the unworthy kind that wins my coin. They enjoy it more, and has a harder time gettin' it."

"Your logic is good, Shorty," says he, "and I think I agree with your sentiments. But this is a case where charity is only an excuse. The ladies out at Rockywold are getting up an affair for the benefit of something or other, no one seems to know just what, and they've put you down for a little bag punching and club swinging."

"Then give 'em to scratch the entry," says I. "I don't make any orchestra circle plays that I can dodge, and when it comes to fightin' the leather before a bunch of peacock millinery I can give every time. I'll put on Swiftly too as a sub, if you've got to have some one."

Pinckney shook his head at that. "No," says he, "I'll tell Sadie she must leave you off the program."

"Hold on," says I. "Was it Sadie billed me for this stunt?"

He said it was.

"Then I'm on the job," says I. "Oh, you can grin your ears off; I don't care."

Well, that was what fetched me out to Rockywold on a Friday night, when I had a right to be watchin' the amateur try-outs at the Marlborough club instead. The show wasn't until Saturday evening, but Pinckney said I ought to be there for the dress rehearsal.

"There's only about a dozen guests there now; so you needn't get skittish," says he.

And a dozen don't go far towards fillin' up a place like Rockywold. Say, if I had the price, I'd like a shack where I could take care of more or less company without settin' up cot beds, but I'll be blasted if I can see the fun in runnin' a free hotel like that.

These amateur shows are apt to be pretty punk, but I could see that, barin' myself, there was a fair aggregation of talent on hand. The star was a googoo-eyed girl who did a barefoot specialty, recitin' pomes to music, and accompanyin' herself with a kind of parlor joochee-cochee that would have drawn capacity houses at Coney. Then there was a pretty boy who could do things to the piano, a funeral-faced duck that could tell funny stories, and a bunch of six or eight like-lookin' ladies and gents who'd laid themselves out to prance through what they called a minuet. Lastly there was me an' Miriam.

She was one of these limp, single-chested girls, Miriam, was. She didn't have much to say, so I didn't take any particular notice of her. But at the rehearsal I got next to the fact that she could tease music out of a violin in great style. It was a right if you shut your eyes, for Miriam wasn't what you'd call a pastel. She was built a good deal on the lines of an L-road pillar, but that didn't bar her from wearin' one o' these short-sleeved, square-necked, girly dresses that didn't leave you much in doubt as to her framework.

Yes, Miriam could have stood a few well-placed pads. She'd lived long enough to have found that out, too, but they was missin'. I should guess that Miriam had begun exhibitin' her collar bones to society about the time poor old John L. fought the battle of New Orleans. Yet when she snuggled the butt end of that violin down under her chin and set it to work across the bridge, she had all the motions of a high-school girl.

Course, I didn't dope all this out to myself at the time; for, as I was sayin', I didn't size her up special. But it came to me afterwards—yes, yes! The excitement broke loose along about the middle of the first night. I'd turned in about an hour before, and was poundin' my ear like a circus hand on a Sunday mornin', when I hears the trouble cry. First off I was out goin' to do any more than turn over and get a fresh hold on the mattress, for I ain't much on routin' out for fires unless I feel the headboard gettin' hot. But then I wakes up enough to remember that Rockywold is in the city, and I begins to throw clothes onto myself.

Inside of two minutes I was outdoors lookin' for a chance to win a Carnegie medal. The first show at all, though. The fire, what there was of it, was in the kitchen, in the basement of the wing where the help stays. Half a dozen stablemen had put it out with the garden hose, and were finishin' the job by soakin' one of the cooks, when I showed up.

I watched 'em for a while, and then started back to my room. Somehow I got twisted up in the shrubbery, and instead of gettin' back the way I came, I gets around on the other corner. Just about then a ground-floor window is shoved up and a female in white floats out on a little stone balcony. She waves her arms and began to call for help.

"You're late," says I. "It's all over."

That didn't satisfy her at all, though. Some smoke and steam was still comin' from the far side of the buildin', and it was blowin' in through another window.

"Help, help!" she squeals. "Help, before I jump!"

"I wouldn't," says I. "They've gone home with the life net."

"Oh, I must jump!"

"Well, if you've got the jumpin' fit," says I. "Jump ahead; but if you can hold yourself in a minute, I'll bring a step-ladder."

"Then hurry, please hurry!" says she, and starts to climb up on the edge of the balcony.

It wasn't more'n six feet to the turf, anyway, and it wouldn't have been any killin' matter if she had jumped, less'n she'd landed on her neck; but she was



as loony as if she'd been standin' on top of the Flatiron buildin', Bein' as how I'd forgot to bring a step-ladder with me. I chases around after somethin' she could come down on. The moon wasn't shinin' very bright, though, and there didn't seem to be any boxes or barrels lyin' around loose, so I gals hold of somethin' that was the very ticket. It was one of these wooden stands for flower pots. I lugs that over and sets it up under the window.

"Now, if you'll just slide down onto that easy," says I, "your life is saved." She looks at it once, and begins to flop her arms and take on again. "I never can do it, I know I can't!" says she. "I'll fall, I'll fall!"

Well, it was a case of Shorty McCabe to the rescue after all. "Comin' up!" says I, and hops on the thing, holdin' out me paws.

She didn't need any more coaxin'. She scrambled over that balcony rail and got a shoulder clutch on me that you couldn't have loosened with a crow-bar. I gathered in the rest of her with my left hand and steadied myself with the other. Lucky she wasn't a heavy-weight, or that pot-holder wouldn't have stood the strain. It cracked some as I went down, but it held together.

"Street floor, all out!" says I, as I hit the grass.

But that didn't even get a wiggle out of her.

"It's all over," says I. "You're rescued."

Talk about your cling-stones! She was it. Never a move. I couldn't tell whether she'd fainted, or was too scared to let go. But it was up to me to do something. I couldn't stand there for the rest of the night holdin' a

SOLVES ICE PROBLEM.

German Invents Simple Way to Harvest Crop Nightly.
(New York Tribune.)

A chance listener in the vicinity of chicken doors these days will hear, in the course of any forenoon, all shades of invective from "the horrid thing" up to "effrontery," "highway robbery" and "criminal monopoly." These terms, he may easily discover, are applied to that perennial theme of ribald song and revolutionary speech, the ice man.

The ice man has just drawn down fresh torrents of wrath upon his head by boosting the wholesale price of ice with a certainty that retail prices will follow; and, as usual, he is receiving the torrents so coolly, so frigidly, that they will probably freeze up before long and give him an extra ice crop. It doesn't put the ice man to get hot over the hard names by which he is called, and he knows it, too. So long as he refrains from irritating the public with open contumely no great competitor will break into his field and force him to sell ice at a reasonable figure. And from small rivals he has nothing to fear, because he can either wrest their lake and river rights from them or crush them by underselling, as soon as they begin cutting into his business seriously. So, at least, the situation has appeared, to the ice man and victims alike. The ice monopoly, however, is a technical sense, seems forced by the nature of things to continue a real monopoly, in methods and in prices, until the Styx is ready for cutting.

But it is darkest before the dawn. A German has discovered an avenue of escape from the ice man. Like many great discoveries, this one is so simple that you must wonder why you didn't think of it fifty years ago, and it is so cheap and unpatentable withal that a poor man may become a successful

competitor of the ice monopoly. As described in scientific journals, the German's contrivance is nothing more than a two-story scaffolding, at the top of which a common garden hose sprinkler, connected with a water main, throws a spray over the structure.

As the water falls upon the numerous cross-beams on a cold winter day, iceicles form and soon fill the whole framework with thick crystal columns, which the ice trust buster easily breaks off and lugs into his near-by icehouse.

In Wurtenburg, where the first icicle machine has been in successful operation for some time, a scaffolding of twenty feet square and twenty feet high produces twenty cubic yards of ice in one nipping night. The clever German does not have to wait for lakes and

strange lady draped the way she was, and it didn't seem to be just the right thing to sit down to it. Besides, one of her elbows was tryin' to puncture my right lung.

"If you're over the fire panic, I'll try and hoist you back through the window, miss," says I. "I hope the audience'll be slim," and with that I starts to finish the lap around the house and make for the double doors.

I've carried weight before, but never that kind, and it seemed like the damned house was as big around as a city block. Once or twice we butted into the bushes, and another time I near tumbled the two of us into the pool of a fountain; but after awhile I struck the front porch, some out of breath, and with a few steps of black hair in my eyes, but still in the game. The lady hadn't made a murmur, and she hadn't slackened her clinch.

I was hopin' to slide in quiet, without bein' spotted by anyone, for most of the women had gone back to bed, and I could hear the men down in the billiard room clickin' glasses over an extra dream soothe. Luck was against me, though. Right under the newelpost light stood Pinckney, wearin' a silk jacket outside of a pair of black broadcloth trousers. When he sees me and what I was luggin' he looks kind of pleased.

"Hello, Shorty!" says he. "What have you there?"

"It might be a porous plaster, by the way it sticks," says I, "but it ain't. It's a lady I've been rescuin', while the rest of you guys was standin' around watchin' a wet cook."

"By Jove!" says Pinckney, steppin' up and takin' a close look. "Miriam!" "Thanks," says I. "We ain't been introduced yet. Do you mind unhookin' her fingers from the back of my neck?" But all he did was to stand there with his mouth corners workin' and them black eyes of his winkin' like a pair of arc lights.

"It's too pretty a picture to spoil," says he. "I hope as the audience'll be slim," and with that I starts to finish the lap around the house and make for the double doors.

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"Say," says I, gettin' me neck out of crook, "I wish that thought had come to her sooner. I feel as if I'd been squeezed by a pair of ice tongs, if she can hug like that in her sleep, what could she do when she was wide awake?"

"Me too," says I. "This looks to me like an attempt at kidnapping." "If you'd had that grip on you I guess you'd have thought it was the real thing," says I. "But there's a little tip I want to pass on to you: Don't go spreadin' this josh business around the lot, or your show'll be minus a star act. I'll stand for all the private kidnapin' you can hand out, but I've got my objections to playin' public joke cook part. Now, will you do it?"

He was mighty disappointed at havin' to do it, but he gave his word like a little man, and I makes tracks upstairs, glad enough to be let off so easy.

"It was a queer kind of a faint," says I. "I bet I fights shy of anything more of the kind that I sees comin' my way. This is what I gets for strayin' so far from Broadway."

But a little thing like that don't interfere with my sleepin' when slumber's on the card, and I proceeds to tear off what was due me on the eight-hour sched, and maybe a little more.

I didn't get a sight of Miriam all day long. Not that I was strainin' my eyes any. There was somethin' better to look at—Sadie, for instance. Course, Pinckney was bossin' the show, but she was bossin' him, and anyone else that

was handy. They were goin' to pull off the racket in the ballroom, and Sadie found a lot to do to it. She's a hummer, Sadie is. Maybe she wasn't brought up among bow-legged English butlers and lot of Swedish maids, but she's learned the trick of gettin' 'em to break their necks for her whenever she says the word.

All the forenoon more folks kept comin' on every train, and there was two rows of them big deep-breathin' touzin' cars in the stables. By dinner time Rockywold looked like a Saratoga hotel durin' the racin' season. Chappies were playin' lawn tennis, and luggin' golf bags around, and keepin' the ivories rollin', while the front walks and porches might have been Fifth ave. on a Monday afternoon, from the dry goods that was bein' sported there.

I stowed myself away in a corner of the billiard room and didn't mix much, but I was takin' it all in. Not that I was feelin' lonesome or anything like that. I likes to see any kind of fun, even if it ain't just my kind. And besides, there was more or less in the bunch that I knew first-rate. But I don't care about pushin' to the front until I gets the call.

So everything runs along smooth, and I was figurin' on makin' a late train durin' the night, when I hears a little turn. I didn't care much about seein' the show, so I stuck to the dressin' room until they sends word that it was my next. We'd had the pinchin' bag apparatus rigged up in the forenoon, and there wasn't anythin' left to be done but hook on the leather and spread out the mat.

Pinckney was doin' the announcin', and the jolly he gives me before he lugs

me out was somethin' fierce. I reckon I was blushin' some when I went on, and maybe that's what called out such a hand. I just took one squint at the mob and felt a chill down my spine. Say, it's one thing to step up before a gang of sports in a hall, and another to prance out in ring clothes on a platform in front of two or three hundred real ladies and gents wearin' their evenin' togs.

There I was, though, and the crowd doin' the hurrah act for all it was worth. When I gets the bag goin' I feels better, and whatever grouch I has against Pinckney for not lettin' me wear my gym suit I puts into short-arm punches on the piaskin. The stunt seemed to take. I could tell that by the buzz that came over the footlights. No matter what you're doin', whether it's makin' campaign speeches or stoppin' a comer in six rounds, it's always a help to know that you've got the crowd with you.

By the time I'd got well warmed up, and was throwin' in all the flourishes that's been invented—double ducks, side-step and swing, shoulder work and so on—I felt real chipper. I makes a grandstand finish and then has the nerve to face the audience and do a matinee bend. As I did that I gets my lamps fixed on some one in the front row.

Say, if you've ever done much on the platform you know how sometimes you'll get a squint at a pair of eyes down front and can't get yourself away from 'em after that. Well, that was the way with me then. There was rows and rows of faces that all looked alike; but this one phiz seemed to stand right out, and to save me all I could do was to stare back from the rest.

It belonged to Miriam. She had her chin tucked down, and her head canted to one side, and her mouth puckered into the mushiest kind of a grin you ever saw. Her eyes were rolled up real kittenish, too. Oh, it was a hummer, that look! I was strikin' his grandmother, that look she was sendin' up to me. I wanted to dodge it and pick up another, but there was no more gettin' away from it than as if I was bein' followed by a searchlight. Worst of it was, I could feel myself grinnin' back at her just as mushy. I was gettin' sillier every breath, and I might have got as far as blowin' kisses at her if I hadn't pulled myself together and begun to juggle the Indian clubs, for the second half of my act.

All the gilder had faded out of me, though, and I cut the rest of it mighty short. As I comes off Sadie grabs me and begins to tell me what a hit I'd made, and how hickled she was, but I shakes her off pretty quick.

"What's your great rush, Shorty?" says she.

"I've got a date to fill down the road," says I, and I makes a quick break for the dressin' room. From there I was gettin' rattled for fear if Miriam should get another look at me she'd mesmerize me so I'd never wake up. I skins into my sack suit, leaves word to have my things expressed to my room, and was just about to make a sudden exit when I bumps into some one at the front door.

"Oh, Mr. McCabe! How did you know where to find me?" says she.

"Say, I'll give you one guess. It was Miriam again. She was got up expensive, all real lace and first-water spurs, and just as handsome as a towel rack. But the minute she turns on that gushy look I'm nailed to the spot, and begins to tell me what a hit I'd made, and how hickled she was, but I shakes her off pretty quick.

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